

Effective Relationship Communication

The following communication checklist is designed to assist couples, families and friends communicate effectively when OCD gets in the way.

REFUSE TO ACCOMMODATE AND REASSURE:

- When in doubt, always ask “is that you or OCD?”
- Statements such as “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure” can take the pressure off of not reassuring without making you feel like you’re ignoring or abandoning them.

ARGUE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY:

- Make time to cool down – take a walk, go to sleep, leave the room or just listen to music.
 - “I need to cool down before I can talk about this reasonably – we can bring it back up after I calm down.”
- Bring topics up proactively, not reactively.
 - It is easier to discuss things when we are calm and not emotionally invested.
 - “I notice that ___ has happened recently. Do you mind if we discuss it?”
- When your partner is expressing difficulty or discussing their problems, reflections can help illustrate understanding, demonstrate empathy, avoid reassurance traps, and help you come to a solution.
 - Partner: *I have been struggling to connect recently because I’m so worried you’re going to leave me because of all of this. You don’t deserve to put up with this.*
 - Reflect: *It sounds like the distance I’ve been feeling is because of your worries. Thank you for telling me.*
- It can be helpful to use “I Feel” statements – “When you do ___, it makes me feel ___.”
- Avoid “blame language” – “**Why** do **you** do ___?” “**Why** can’t **you** just ___?”
- Stay solution oriented: state your needs clearly, simply and remind them when necessary
 - Change is easier when we are given clear instructions: “In order to feel ___, I need you to do ___.”
 - Have patience, change takes time and gentle reminders can help us get there.
 - Offer praise when they meet your needs, even if it is frustrating.
- Remember, your needs deserve to be met too!

BEING A CAREGIVER DOES NOT MEAN YOU AREN’T IMPORTANT AND DESERVING:

- Make time for self-care, “you” time, fun activities, and recovery.
- Caregiver burnout happens when we lose sight of our needs – **making time for yourself is the most selfless thing you can do!** It goes a long way towards helping YOU help others!